

Abraham Lincoln's Romance

By Dorothy E. Mead

[INTRODUCTORY NOTE: All young people are great admirers of noble characters as Napoleon, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and others. Many of us, however, think of these men as being large, stanch, invincible characters with perhaps very little of the human nature that is found in the rest of us. Consequently Bernie Babcock's story of "The Soul of Ann Rutledge" has been written in a shorter form that we might have a greater appreciation for the human side of one of our great men. This story may well be told in one of the February programs of your young people's organizations.]

ONE April day nearly the entire town of New Salem was gathered along the banks of the Mississippi River to see a flat boat which was stuck in the mud. It was whispered around the town that a fellow with the longest legs and the homeliest face that ever lived was on his way to New Orleans in this boat. No one in the town seemed to be able to assist in making the boat free. But after a while the cool, level head of that long-legged fellow pulled it out. He went on down the river while the people of the town moved back to their store boxes, washing, and gardening.

A few weeks later the news was spread throughout the village that this same tall, homely man had returned from New Orleans, was going to settle there in the town and that his name was Abraham Lincoln.

One night when Abraham was going home from the store in which he was clerking, he heard a dog barking, a cow-bell tingling, and the voice of a woman singing:

"I'm a pilgrim; and I'm a stranger;
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night."

He dropped back into the shadows to listen. To him it seemed a beautiful full voice that sang these words, but the thing that im-

pressed him most was the spirit or soul back of the one who sang.

He stood in this spot for some time, reflecting on the song and the one who sang it until the cow-bell could be heard no longer in the distance. When he started on he found his hat in his hand, not remembering in what moment of reverence he had taken it off.

The voice, the song, and the spirit of the song was uppermost in his mind for several days afterward. He made many inquiries as to who it might be and finally learned that it was Ann Rutledge, the prettiest girl in the town and the one who had the most "schoolin'." He also learned that she was engaged to marry one John McNeil, who had saved \$10,000

ABE was a steady fellow and known in the town as never looking at the girls. It so happened that after a while Abe came to live at the Rutledge Inn. This, of course, naturally threw him with the daughter of the inn keeper. He admired Ann for her beautiful spirit, her education, and her love of people. Ann admired Abe for his honesty, his strength, his "book knowledge," and his kind acts to the unfortunate. Together they read in the evenings before the open fire or fixed up a basket for Abe to take to some poor family near by.

One day when Abe was sent to the cellar for some potatoes he found Ann sobbing as though her heart would break. She said she could not tell what it was about. It was a secret she had promised John she would not tell—not even to her father or mother—and it was worrying her so that she didn't know what to do.

This accounted for John's unusual absence the last few weeks and for Ann's

thin, worried face. Abe prevailed upon her to tell her mother as no man had a right to make a girl keep anything from her parents.

The secret proved to be that John McNeil was not John McNeil. It was a name he had assumed upon coming to this town as he wanted to break all ties with and responsibility for his family in order that he might make a fortune for himself. He had now gone back home to his family and would return again to marry her.

Several weeks had passed and she had received no word from her lover. Ann's father was indignant and told Ann that if John did return she could not marry him, for if he was negligent to his mother and family he was apt to treat his wife the same way.

Almost at once Abe's heart began to beat faster—hope loomed up of a happiness ahead. He became more ambitious than ever. Why?—he hardly knew except that he was keenly conscious of all Ann's looks, thoughts, and deeds when she was around.

BUT all these good spirits were shattered when word was received that a debt had fallen on his shoulders which, at his present financial income, would take a lifetime to pay off. That night Abe was missing at supper. Ann went to the store and to the village post office but he was not to be found. She went home, filled a basket with some food, and made an excuse to go to the mill.

It was just twilight and the shadows fell long. As Ann entered the mill she saw in the door opposite, opening on to the mill stream, the form of the long, lank man she was hunting. His spirits were down. He didn't see how he could ever believe in God

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The Parables of Safed the Sage

The Parable of The Newspaper Lad

BUT one thing doth separate me and Keturah at the Breakfast Table, and that is the Morning Paper.

For I take the Politics Part and she doth take the Gossip Part, and we read both of us a part of the time. And part of the time we talk. And our Paper cometh unto us every morning except the Sabbath; for on that day I will not enslave myself with it. For it is not unto me a question of the sin of it, but of the freedom of the spirit upon one day from the concerns of the secular.

And the Paper is brought by a Lad who waddeth it up skillfully and throweth it so that it falleth upon the Porch hard by the Front Door. But when it Raineth, or Bloweth, or Snoweth, then doth he hurl it from a Greater Distance. And if he hath good luck, it landeth on the Front Lawn out in the Rain. And if his luck is not so good, it goeth into the Shrubbery, or into Any Old Place that doth hap.

And I answered and spake unto the Lad, saying, I once was a Lad, and I did jobs like unto this, and I am strong for the Boys. And it is no joy to me on a Cold or Wet Morning that thou crawlest out of the Hay before Star

Light and bravest the Weather to get me my Paper: and if I were the only one to be considered, I could dry the old thing out on the Radiator and make the best of it. But there is another that I must consider, and that is thyself. For if thou goest through life Cutting Corners, and delivering the goods Any Old Way, how shall it be with thy Future as a Man?

And I said unto him, So far as I am concerned, I will not revile thee. But when thou playest Ball, it is not a question whether it is convenient for thee to make the throw, but whether thou canst get the Ball to First Base ahead of the Batter, and not only get it there on time, but get it where the baseman can possess it.

And I said, Thou art going out into a Rather Exacting World, which judgeth men not by their Motive but by their Success. Even if it keep thee a little longer in the Rain or Cold, I advise thee to deliver the Morning Paper on the Front Porch, hard by the Door. And it shall be for thy praise now, and for thy Welfare in the years to come.

And if he shall do this, it will help him to make a man. But Boys are not the only kind of folk who need this Lesson.

"I See by 'The Epworth Herald'"

Topic for February 12—An International Opportunity and Obligation (Mission Study)
(Mark 4:30-32)

The End of "John Wesley, Jr."?

Is it the end of "John Wesley, Jr."? Or has the study of this young man with his honest human sympathies, aroused in you certain attitudes or ambitions that will never die?

In this, the last Sunday evening meeting devoted to the Mission Study book, we must travel swiftly. Spanish-America, China and India whirl before us too rapidly for close examination, but we may, each of us, strive to have the same experience that "J. W." had: see the Church in all the world and see it whole. You will want to read that last chapter in the book, many times.

This number of THE EPWORTH HERALD has an abundance of material that will add to your appreciation of the evening's topic. See the first two articles and the short story in the forepart of the paper. Be sure to take time to answer the questions about the plan of study books given under the heading, immediately below.

And if you have time, at this meeting on Lincoln's Birthday, it will not be inappropriate to have someone retell the story of "Abraham Lincoln's Romance," found on pages 9 and 14.

Has Your Chapter Been Using "John Wesley, Jr."?

THE EPWORTH HERALD wants to find out how the "J. W., Jr." experiment worked.

This book is the first mission-study textbook in the form of a story ever used in the Epworth League.

It has had the floor now for some weeks in the devotional meeting. The season will soon be over.

Will you who have been using the book, either as leaders or in the ranks, look over the questions below, and send us your answers? We will print an analysis of what you report, together with any brief expression of opinion which you may feel inclined to offer.

You Can Answer All These Questions on a Post Card

1. Was it interesting, as a League study book?
2. Was it informing?
3. As a study of Christian work, did it get anywhere?
4. Did it start any discussion?
5. Did it bring out any marked differences of opinion on the subjects discussed?
6. Did it get any attention from people who are not usually interested in the study of religious work?
7. Did it leave anybody with an appetite for more?
8. Would you approve the use of the story plan again in a study book for League use?
9. If so, would you favor another book that should be a sort of sequel to "John Wesley, Jr."?
10. In general, admitting the importance of regular text-books in classes where attendance and study are compulsory, do you think that a "story-text" has any large

value for classes in which attendance and study are entirely voluntary, as they are in the League?

11. Put into twenty-five words whatever you care to say about the six weeks of "J. W., Jr." in your League; the interest, some unusual incident, some criticism, or anything else you think worth reporting about the meetings.

Of course if you care to "enlarge," take all the space you need. But questions 1 to 10, inclusive, can be answered by "Yes" or "No," and you need not write out the questions. The numbers will be sufficient. Question 11 is plainly not a question at all, but a request. Use the rest of the post card for it.

Sign your card, and give your address. Your name will not be used if you prefer to have it withheld, in which case put it within parentheses, (); but we cannot use unsigned answers.

Abraham Lincoln's Romance

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with such a burden as this when his life had been full of honest dealings and service to others. She begged him to let her tell him a story.

She began: One day when a girl she sat on a stump in a pond. Suddenly she saw an ugly mud-colored grub climbing up the reed by her stump. She was almost tempted to shove it off into the water, but as she watched the muddy shell it began to break open and a creature with beautiful silver wings came forth. It seemed almost like a fairy story—and then as she reflected, she thought of how we people here on earth are in our "earth" form like the muddy shell, representing our natural body and that when the time comes our spiritual body will reign in all its beauty.

Then she thought of how the new creature, like the heavenly ones must long to tell those of the earth of the joy and the life that will come to them later on. Then she turned and asked him if he did not think that his mother, now in the spiritual form, longed to tell him that all these troubles and cares are of the "earthly" body and all a preparation for the life of beauty and happiness to come?

Continuing she explained that the reason she was so happy and the reason that he liked to hear her sing "I'm a pilgrim" was because it was her *soul* that was singing—that part of her that would never die. Finally he saw and was willing to believe. But he said he could not go on believing without her help—and love.

After this little talk at the mill, it was decided at a family conference that Ann should write a letter to John telling him that after what had happened she could not marry him but was going to marry Abraham Lincoln.

IN the spring of the year they went to be married. It was necessary for the Rutledges to move to another town. This was also about the time Abraham took up surveying, so it meant that they only saw each other occasionally. In May he came to visit and attend the May party, at which Ann was to be the May queen. After the

party, the couple slipped off to the brook to sit on a stone where they could talk quietly together of all that had happened during their separation, of all that was dear to their memory and of much that they looked forward to in the coming year when they would begin their lives together. As the evening wore on, she began to sneeze and suddenly realizing that she was catching cold, they went back into the house.

When Abe Lincoln made his next visit to the Rutledge home the last of June, he found Ann with a heavy cold and cough which her mother said she had gotten the night of the May party. She seemed to have the same spirit and soul, but all within a body that seemed more frail than usual.

A few weeks later Abe met Dr. Allen, who said that Ann was not getting along well and that he had better run out. Abe dropped everything and went. This time she was in bed, nothing apparently the matter except that she had this cough and was very weak. As he sat on the bed and they talked together, she told him of all that she had been thinking and wondered if he ever thought of how souls traveled.

She told him that she believed that her soul was always with him—that when he was happy, glad, and joyous he should remember that the singing, shouting soul of Ann Rutledge was quite near helping him to rejoice; sometimes when he felt tired and weary that the soul of Ann Rutledge would be near by, trying to draw him out of his weakness. And when he would become old and his eyes dim, he would hear her voice, then having slept under the grass for fifty years.

After Ann had rested a bit, Abraham asked if she couldn't sing for him *his* song. She started in bravely with a voice that was just as clear and full of meaning as on the first night—but much weaker:

"I'm a pilgrim, and I'm a stranger;
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night."

This she sang with some difficulty, stopping a time or two to cough and regain strength. Then she continued with a struggle for breath between each word, "Do—not—detain—me"—she had to stop—her head fell back against Abraham's breast—and her last breath left her.

"Where had Abraham Lincoln gone?"—this question was on the lips of many a person in and around New Salem. The last that had been seen of him was when he passed out the door of the Rutledge home a few minutes after Ann died. He wasn't even present at the funeral.

SUCH days and nights as Abraham Lincoln spent, without food and without sleep! He visited again the mill where she found him and where he first told her of his love; and where she spoke of the spiritual body and of the soul of Ann Rutledge which would never die. He visited the stone by the brook, where they had sat on the night of the May party, when she had caught the cold that had taken her from him. The wreath of the May queen was still there on the stone all dried up.

In it all Ann Rutledge's soul seemed to speak to him—all that she had said about her living soul finally found a place in his thinking. It was the living soul of Ann Rutledge that brought him to himself and told him that he must live on always at his best.

Oak Park, Ill.